

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MOSCOW 03149 011739Z

41

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TO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO IMMEDIATE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 3149

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PARM, UR, CE

SUBJ: BREZHNEV STATEMENT ON INDIAN OCEAN BASES

REF: COLOMBO 739

1. THE QUOTATION FROM BREZHNEV'S SPEECH IS ACCURATELY RENDERED IN THE TASS TRANSLATION (REFTEL, PARA. 1). SO FAR AS WE ARE AWARE, IT IS THE FIRST SUCH EXPLICIT PUBLIC SOVIET STATEMENT THAT THE USSR HAS NOT HAD AND DOES NOT PLAN TO BUILD ANY BASES IN THE INDIAN OCEAN ALTHOUGH LAST JULY BREZHNEV AND OTHER SOVIET LEADERS USED SIMILAR LANGUAGE WITH THE U.S. SENATE DELEGATION LED BY SENATORS HUMPHREY AND SCOTT.

2. IT SHOULD BE REMEMBERED, HOWEVER, THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE NEVER ACKNOWLEDGED THAT BERBERA OR OTHER FACILITIES AVAILABLE TO SOVIET FORCES IN THE INDIAN OCEAN ARE "BASES." THIS IS A QUESTION OF WORD-GAMES, THEN, NOT OF SUBSTANCE AND IN THAT RESPECT BREZHNEV'S STATEMENT DOES NOT CHANGE THE SITUATION. AS WITH LOWER-LEVEL COMMENTARIES, IT IN EFFECT CALLS FOR THE U.S. UNILATERALLY TO FOREGO THE CONSTRUCTION OF "BASES".

STOESSEL

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PAGE 02 MOSCOW 03149 011739Z

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